

HONORING DREW GRIFFIN'S SERVICE TO OHIO'S FIFTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

**HON. ROBERT E. LATTA**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 29, 2022*

Mr. LATTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a dedicated member of my staff, Drew Griffin, who will be leaving our office at the beginning of September.

Hailing originally from the Pacific Northwest, Drew has dedicated his career to public service, including time spent working on behalf of the people of Washington and Minnesota. We have been blessed to have Drew working on behalf of the Buckeye state for the past six years, three of which as my Chief of Staff, and we know it will be hard to replace him.

A dedicated sports fan, Drew could always be counted on to discuss the latest news impacting his Seattle Sounders or Washington Nationals. He instilled in everyone he interacted with a sense of comradery and purpose, showcasing the positive impact that individuals can have on their community if they worked together.

Drew is also a loving father to daughter, Eve, and son, Jack, and a dedicated husband to Ann. As he enters this next chapter in his life, I know that he will have the love and support of his family and friends to help him along the way.

I am eternally grateful for Drew for all he has done for me, and I wish him and his family the best.

STATEWIDE WRITING CONTEST WINNERS

**HON. J. FRENCH HILL**

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 29, 2022*

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the winners of the 2022 Arkansas PBS KIDS Writers Contest.

This competition was created to assist in advancing the literacy skills of young children by way of hands-on, active learning.

The criteria for which these young authors were judged included originality, creative expression, storytelling, and integration of text and illustrations.

Ninety-three students between kindergarten and 3rd grade submitted entries for this year's competition.

Submissions were divided by grade, with 3 winners for each group.

First place winners from Arkansas Second Congressional District include Abigail Wharton of Conway and Elijah Smith of Benton.

Beginning July 6th, all students who entered the competition were given the opportunity to read their stories during a summer learning broadcast series, produced by Arkansas PBS.

Congratulations to the winners of the 2022 Arkansas PBS KIDS Writers Contest, and I commend all who submitted stories.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF MSG MICHAEL CLARK

**HON. JOE COURTNEY**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 29, 2022*

Mr. COURTNEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to mourn the premature, tragic loss of an American patriot, devoted husband and parent, Master Sergeant Michael Clark of Bolton, Connecticut, age 41. MSG Clark tragically lost his life on July 20, 2022, from a lightning strike while on army reserve training exercises with his unit at Fort Gordon, Georgia.

Born in Springfield, Massachusetts, Michael was brought up in a family with a deep sense of duty to our nation. Like his father David Clark, Michael 22 years ago volunteered to wear the uniform of his country in the U.S. Army. During that time, he deployed on four occasions to Iraq and Afghanistan. As a striking example of the Clark family's devotion to military service, he and his father were simultaneously deployed overseas on two occasions. MSG Clark was an operating room specialist with the U.S. Army Reserves, assisting with lifesaving, emergency surgeries in dangerous environments. Madam Speaker, sometimes the essential role of our military's Reserve Force is not that well understood or appreciated. MSG Clark's life and public service is a powerful reminder of how critical all of our reserve forces are in providing key support for active-duty soldiers, sailors, marines and coast guard as part of the mission to defend our nation and our way of life.

At home, David applied his skills to another center of excellence, the Bone and Joint Institute at Hartford Hospital, facilitating high quality orthopedic and healing care to the Connecticut community at large. His work in that cutting-edge hospital system, enhanced the skills he applied to the work he performed in the Army Reserve. His double faceted work in the civilian and military sector highlights that he was the quintessential "citizen soldier" which forms the backbone of our guard and reserve system.

A family man at heart, Michael's passing is heartbreaking for his wife, Rachel, and two children, Logan and Hailey. He was very involved in his children's sports and active in the town of Bolton, which has been mourning his loss since the news of his passing was made public. The Bolton Fire Department immediately displayed a prominent memorial to MSG Clark at its fire station which as another volunteer force is fitting. Though he never left for deployment without leaving a love letter at Rachel's bedside, he still kept involved with his family, and made sure to prioritize his children's upbringing. The void left behind him has already exerted a strong influence upon the relatively young Clark family and children especially, and we can only find solace in coming to cherish—with time—the lessons and positive force that he spread during his short time on this earth. Carrying those memories onward is paramount as we simultaneously appreciate the unmatched level of dedication he purposed towards nurturing his family.

Madam Speaker, MSG Clark's legacy of commitment toward those around him remains infinite. He was a doer and as part of the "car-

ing profession", a highly talented healer. We bear the standard of his memory not just to honor his service to his family and our Nation, but also to put him forth as an example of how every one of us to carry our own lives, trying help and heal others. To that end, Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in this moment to honor the name and character of MSG Michael Clark, so that we may preserve for austerity his life's story.

BIG CAT PUBLIC SAFETY ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 28, 2022*

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 263, the "Big Cat Public Safety Act" which would prohibit the private possession, breeding, and public exploitation of lions, tigers, leopards, and other large cats.

H.R. 263 amends the animal rights protections outlined in the "Lacey Act" and the "Captive Wildlife Safety Act" by prohibiting the import and shipment of big cats in the U.S., preventing public contact with big cats outside of academic and research institutions, and halting the illegal breeding of cubs by private owners.

I have long been an advocate for protecting big cats.

In the 114th Congress, I proudly sponsored the "Cecil the Lion Endangered and Threatened Species Act of 2015" which prohibited the importation of any endangered animal killed via trophy hunting, including African lions, amur leopards, and other big cat species.

Today I will continue to fight for the wellbeing of these animals by urging Congress to pass this equally important piece of legislation—H.R. 263.

It is estimated that there are anywhere between 10,000 and 20,000 big cats living in private captivity within the U.S.

In fact, the Humane Society has been quoted saying that there are more tigers in captivity in Texas alone, than there are in the wild in the entire world;

These noble animals often live in terrible conditions and are at risk of abuse and neglect at the hands of inexperienced and untrained handlers.

Many big cats are used as side show attractions for private roadside zoos that masquerade as rescue sanctuaries.

Under the guise of wildlife conservation, private animal collectors manipulate the public into paying money and offering donations for the upkeep of their big cats. While private owners profit off the animals, the living conditions of the lions, tigers, leopards, and other animals rarely improve.

Under H.R. 263, private owners would be allowed to retain their current animals—with restriction.

This legislation would mandate that all privately owned big cats be registered to ensure that first responders and animal control officers are aware of the presence of big cats within their communities.

This allows police to be prepared in the event of an animal attack or escape.

In 2021 a 175-pound tiger was famously caught on film stalking an off-duty police officer in Houston. Videos show the officer aiming

a pistol at the tiger as the animal continued to prowel closer.

It took law enforcement officials more than a week to track down and arrest the wild animal's owner. Had this animal been registered to the city, the owner would have been identified and the situation would have been more rapidly resolved.

Fortunately, in that instance neither city residents nor the tiger were harmed. However, that is not always the case with captive big cats.

Since 1990, more than 400 dangerous incidents involving big cats have occurred across the country.

Four children and 16 adults have lost their lives. Hundreds more have been mauled or mutilated.

Big cats cannot be domesticated.

They are not pets whose ancestors have lived alongside humans for thousands of years.

They are not for human amusement.

Regardless of how much human contact these animals experience, big cats will always maintain their natural instinct to hunt and attack.

They are, and always will be, wild animals.

While large menageries of adult tigers and leopards attract tourists to private zoos, baby cats are the most lucrative resource for private animal collectors.

Unregulated zoos receive the majority of their income through the despicable practice of "cub-petting."

Cub petting requires that baby lions, tigers, and other cats be ripped from their mothers just hours after birth so that they can be handled and photographed by paying tourists.

Because visitors want to see the smallest and youngest cubs, zoos only put cubs on display until they are about 8 to 12 weeks old.

At that point, the cubs become financial and safety liabilities.

Once they are too big to be used for cub petting some are killed, distributed on the black market for animal parts, or sold for pets.

The "Big Cat Public Safety Act" would put a stop to this barbaric and inhumane practice by prohibiting the accidental and intentional breeding of new cubs.

H.R. 263 would allow big cat breeding only by wildlife sanctuaries, veterinarians, universities, and zoos that have qualified and trained staff acting within the best interest of animals and ecological conservation.

The bill would also require that any public observation of big cats be at a distance of 15 feet, thus preventing the continued practice of cub-petting and big cat photo ops.

By implementing these reforms, Congress can continue to support the protection of endangered species while preventing the exploitation and abuse of big cats in America.

I have consistently called for the development of pragmatic, environmentally friendly, and economically efficient strategies for addressing and resolving environmental and animal rights crises.

This bill is a viable solution to the plight of big cats in American captivity.

The "Big Cat Public Safety Act" is an invaluable step towards preventing animal abuse and threats to public safety in the United States.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I encourage my constituents to steer clear of any and all private big cat zoos or col-

lections. There are ways to honor and observe these magnificent animals while ensuring they receive the respect and care they deserve.

## HONORING THE LIFE OF TO VAN LAI

### HON. MICHELLE STEEL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 29, 2022*

Mrs. STEEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the life of one of my constituents. To Van Lai of Westminster lived a truly vibrant life and touched the lives of Vietnamese communities in Orange County and around the world.

After working as a university professor, To Van Lai established Thuy Nga Productions in Saigon, bringing the joy of music to the people of Vietnam.

When the communist government there banned his work, he took his company to France. There, he produced his most well-known and beloved work: *Paris by Night*, a renowned variety show that has brought Vietnamese entertainment to homes around the world.

Throughout his career, he valued the history, language, and tradition of the Vietnamese people.

He believed deeply that "If you still have the Vietnamese language, then you still haven't lost the people." To Van Lai's life reminds us to treasure and honor the rich heritage and culture of our Vietnamese communities.

My prayers are with his family during this difficult time. May his memory of preserving the heritage of our Vietnamese neighbors live on, and may he rest in peace.

## RECOGNIZING OFFICER TONY BREEDEN ON HIS RETIREMENT

### HON. RALPH NORMAN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 29, 2022*

Mr. NORMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the dedicated service of Police Officer Tony Breeden who will officially retire this year.

Tony was born in Winchester, Virginia, where he and his family lived for 2 years. His family later moved to Charlotte, N.C. where he attended Myers Park High School graduating in 1988. Upon graduating from High School, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps where he served from 1988 to 1992.

After spending four years in the Marine Corps, he then joined the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Department where he worked for 2 years, until joining the Rock Hill Police Department in 1995 through 2022.

He rose through the ranks beginning with the traffic unit, sergeant of the street crimes unit, patrol Lieutenant of Charlie Shift, and member of the highly decorated SWAT team unit for 26 years serving from 1996 to 2022.

Officer Breeden found time to serve the greater Rock Hill community by coaching various sports for over 27 years at his church and in the city leagues, dating back to 1995.

Tony and his wife, Brooke, have 3 children Austin, Kolby, and Devin. Officer Breeden is

the epitome of the American success story, where he has risen above many personal challenges, including having his father leave his family when Tony was 5 years of age. He and his brother and sister were left to be raised by a single mother.

The greatest tragedy the Breeden family has faced was the sudden loss of their son Kolby on March 14th, 2021. In the words of one of Kolby's closest friends, Julianne Young, "Kolby was the epitome of good. He not only lit up every room he walked in but made everyone in that room a better person just by spending time with them."

The Rock Hill Police Department and the greater Rock Hill community will lose a true public servant who epitomized the police officer motto of "To Protect And To Serve".

Lieutenant Tony Breeden has set the Gold Standard for 27 years of dedicated service and commitment which will long be remembered and for that we all join in saying Thank You.

## RECOGNIZING THE UPPER PENINSULA LUGE CLUB OF NEGAUNEE, MICHIGAN

### HON. JACK BERGMAN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 29, 2022*

Mr. BERGMAN. Madam Speaker, it is my honor to recognize the Upper Peninsula Luge Club (UPLC) of Negaunee, Michigan for all their accomplishments this past year. A non-profit organization, UPLC has been serving their Yooper community for over forty years with the goal of promoting the sport throughout the region. Through their commitment to excellence and inclusivity, UPLC creates a fun, safe, and accessible activity during the long winter season of the Upper Peninsula.

Built circa 1990 by Swedish Civil Engineer, Per Vinberg, the Lucy Hill Naturbahn Luge Track is the only full-length natural luge track in the United States. In addition to maintaining and operating the track, members of the UPLC help introduce Yoopers to the sport and provide instruction for new sledders, as well as participate in community events like Negaunee's annual Heikki Lunta Winter Festival. On top of promoting local lugging, the UP Luge Club supports a national competition team that competes all over the world—including the FIL Junior World Cup in Latzfons, Italy. They also host U.S. athletes that come to the course to train before going to World Cup and World Championship Competitions in Europe. Through more than four decades of dedication to the sport and their local community, the UPLC has become an indispensable part of the Upper Peninsula.

Madam Speaker, it is my honor to recognize the Upper Peninsula Luge Club for their contributions and service to Michigan. On behalf of Michigan's First District, I wish them all the best in their future endeavors.